

Fergal Coultry

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To seanadreformwg@taoiseach.gov.i
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Subject Reform Proposals

Dear Sir/Madam

With regard to the ongoing reform of the Seanad, I would like to add a few points for your consideration:

- I would lend my support to any change to broaden the Seanad electorate to all 3rd level educational institutions. This should help to include a more broad based electorate for the Seanad.
- The Seanad could also lead the way in becoming a political institution which normalizes working hours in order to make it more representative of how people in Ireland work today. It should operate from Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 5.30pm with a level of flexibility built in, where this is required for emergencies. I am very interested in politics, but there is no way I would destroy my family life by working the hours that political office in Ireland demands today. Moreover, I don't know how I could arrange childcare to match these working hours. My job today in the private sector, working at director level in finance for an American multi-national is very demanding, but at that level it is still very possible to find a balance between family and work commitments, I just don't see that possibility in public political life.
- Recesses should also reflect the 20-25 days annual leave entitlement that most working people in the country adhere to.
- Expenses for senators should be 100% vouched to actual receipts and no per-diem allowances paid.
- Quarterly attendance reports should be made publicly available and should be the subject of a press release and published also in social media. This institution must be seen to work as well. Levels of non-attendance should be punishable by losing one's right to a seat (not sure if this is constitutionally possible but this is highly desirable).
- The Seanad must not be another version of the Dail. The method of filling Seanad seats via County Councils needs to be stopped as does the Taoiseach nominee process. I like the idea of having subject matter experts from areas who do not normally intervene too much in the political arena instead of Taoiseach's nominees and these should be chosen by the electorate, not by the Taoiseach. The existing panels could be broadened to include the requirement to have at least one senator from the worlds of: Sport, Culture, Agriculture, Big Business, Small/Medium Business, Media, Technology, Senior Citizens, Youth, Marginalised, Special Needs, Consumers - lots of other possibilities here. These need to be one term appointments with no political career aspirations who will champion the needs of their constituency at national level.

There should also be a mechanism for these varied voices to be more than heard, their voice needs to be reflected in the legislation that passes through the house.

- Total remuneration package (salary and other benefits) of senators need to be sufficient to attract top talent.

I hope you have found these useful and am available should you wish to discuss further.

Best regards.

Fergal Coultry